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ABSTRACT

The American Sociological Association's code of ethics for sociologists is presented. For sociological research and practice, 10 requirements for ethical behavior are identified, including: maintaining objectivity and integrity; fully reporting findings and research methods, without omission of significant data; reporting fully all sources of financial support in publications as well as any special relations to a sponsor; not accepting funding or research assignments that may violate these ethics; developing explicit agreements for joint projects with colleagues or students, preferably in writing, and covering division of work, compensation, access to data, and rights of authorship; and carefully stating significant qualifications on the research findings and interpretations when findings are relevant to public policy or debate. Also covered are requirements for sociologists who conduct research in foreign countries or who work outside of the academic setting, ways to respect the rights of research populations, the publications and review process, and teaching and supervision. Policies and procedures of the Association's Committee on Professional Ethics concerning the interpretation of the code and investigation of complaints brought under it are also stated. (SW)

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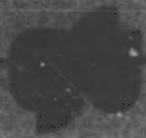

American
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Association

CODE OF ETHICS

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CODE OF ETHICS

PREAMBLE

Along with those in other scholarly and scientific disciplines, sociologists subscribe to the general tenets of science and scholarship. Teaching sociologists are also guided by ethical and professional principles that govern that activity. In addition, because of its specific subject matters, sociologists are especially sensitive to the potential for harm to individuals, groups, organizations, communities and societies that may arise out of the misuse of sociological work and knowledge.

As a discipline committed to the free and open access to knowledge and to self regulation through peer review and appraisal, sociology shares with other disciplines the commitment to the pursuit of accurate and precise knowledge and to public disclosure of findings. However, because sociology necessarily entails study of individuals, groups, organzations and societies, these principles may occasionally conflict with more general ethical concerns for the rights of subjects to privacy and for the treatment of subjects with due regard for their integrity, dignity and autonomy. This potential conflict provides one of the justifications for a code of ethics.

The styles of sociological work are diverse and changing. So also are the contexts within which sociologists find employment. These diversities of procedures and context have led to ambiguities concerning appropriate professional behavior. These ambiguities provide another justification for this code.

Finally, this code also attempts to meet the expressed needs of sociologists who have asked for guidance in how best to proceed in a variety of situations involving subjects of investigation, relations with colleagues, and public authorities.

This code establishes feasible requirements for ethical behavior. These requirements cover many-but not all-of the potential sources of ethical conflict that may arise in scholarship, research, teaching and practice. Most represent prima facie obligations that may admit of exceptions but which should generally stand as principles for guiding conduct. The code states an associational consensus about ethical behavior upon which the Committee on Professional Ethics will base its judgments when it must decide whether individual members of the Association have acted unethically in specific instances. More than this, however, the code is meant to sensitize all sociologists to the ethical issues that may arise in their work, and to encourage sociologists to educate themselves and their colleagues to behave ethically. To fulfill these purposes, we, the members of the American Sociological Association, affirm and support the following Code of Ethics:

I. SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

A. *Objectivity and Integrity*

Sociologists should strive to maintain objectivity and integrity in the conduct of sociological and research practice.

1. Sociologists should adhere to the highest possible technical standards in their research . When findings may have direct implications for public policy or for the well-being of subjects, research should not be undertaken unless the requisite skills and resources are available to accomplish the research adequately.
2. Since individual sociologists vary in their research modes, skills and experience, sociologists should always set forth *ex ante* the disciplinary and personal limitations that condition whether or not a research project can be successfully completed and condition the validity of findings.

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3. Regardless of work settings, sociologists are obligated to report findings fully and without omission of significant data. Sociologists should also disclose details of their theories, methods and research designs that might bear upon interpretation of research findings.
4. Sociologists must report fully all sources of financial support in their publications and must note any special relations to any sponsor.
5. Sociologists should not make any guarantees to subjects-individuals, groups or organizations-unless there is full intention and ability to honor such commitments. All such guarantees, once made, must be honored unless there is a clear, compelling and overriding reason not to do so.
6. Consistent with the spirit of full disclosure of method and analysis, sociologists should make their data available to other qualified social scientists, at reasonable cost, after they have completed their own analyses, except in cases where confidentiality or the claims of a fieldworker to the privacy of personal notes necessarily would be violated in doing so. The timeliness of this obligation is especially critical where the research is perceived to have policy implications.
7. Sociologists must not accept grants, contracts or research assignments that appear likely to require violation of the principles above, and should dissociate themselves from research when they discover a violation and are unable to achieve its correction.
8. When financial support for a project has been accepted, sociologists must make every reasonable effort to complete the proposed work, including reports to the funding source.
9. When several sociologists, including students, are involved in joint projects, there should be mutually accepted explicit agreements, preferably written, at the outset with respect to division of work, compensation, access to data, rights of authorship, and other rights and responsibilities. Of course, such agreements may need to be modified as the project evolves.
10. When it is likely that research findings will bear on public policy or debate, sociologists should take particular care to state all significant qualifications on the findings and interpretations of their research.

B. *Sociologists must not knowingly use their disciplinary roles as covers to obtain information for other than disciplinary purposes.*

C. *Cross-national Research*

Research conducted in foreign countries raises special ethical issues for the investigator and the profession. Disparities in wealth, power, and political systems between the researcher's country and the host country may create problems of equity in research collaboration and conflicts of interest for the visiting scholar. Also, to follow the precepts of the scientific method-such as those requiring full disclosure-may entail adverse consequences or personal risks for individuals and groups in the host country. Finally, irresponsible actions by a single researcher or research team can eliminate or reduce future access to a country by the entire profession and its allied fields.

1. Sociologists should not use their research or consulting roles as covers to gather intelligence for any government.
2. Sociologists should not act as agents for any organization or government without disclosing that role.
3. Research should take culturally appropriate steps to secure informed consent and to avoid invasions of privacy. Special actions may be necessary where the individuals studied are illiterate, of very low social status, and/or unfamiliar with social research.

4. While generally adhering to the norm of acknowledging the contributions of all collaborators, sociologists working in foreign areas should be sensitive to harm that may arise from disclosure, and respect a collaborator's wish/or need for anonymity. Full disclosure may be made later if circumstances permit.
5. All research findings, except those likely to cause harm to collaborators and participants, should be made available in the host country, ideally in the language of that country. Where feasible, raw data stripped of identifiers should also be made available. With repressive governments and in situations of armed conflict, researchers should take particular care to avoid inflicting harm.
6. Because research and/or findings may have important political repercussions, sociologists must weigh carefully the political effects of conducting research or disclosure of findings on international tensions or domestic conflicts. It can be anticipated that there are some circumstances where disclosure would be desirable despite possible adverse effects; however, ordinarily research should not be undertaken or findings released when they can be expected to exacerbate international tensions or domestic conflicts.

D. *Work Outside of Academic Settings*

Sociologists who work in organizations providing a lesser degree of autonomy than academic settings may face special problems. In satisfying their obligations to employers, sociologists in such settings must make every effort to adhere to the professional obligations contained in the code. Those accepting employment as sociologists in business, government, and other non-academic settings should be aware of possible constraints on research and publication in those settings and should negotiate clear understandings about such conditions accompanying their research and scholarly activity.

E. *Respect for the Rights of Research Populations*

1. Individuals, families, households, kin and friendship groups that are subjects of research are entitled to rights of biographical anonymity. Organizations, large collectivities such as neighborhoods, ethnic groups, or religious denominations, corporations, governments, public agencies, public officials, persons in the public eye, are not entitled automatically to privacy and need not be extended routinely guarantees of privacy and confidentiality. However, if any guarantees are made, they must be honored unless there are clear and compelling reasons not to do so.
2. Information about persons obtained from records that are open to public scrutiny cannot be protected by guarantees of privacy or confidentiality.
3. The process of conducting sociological research must not expose subjects to substantial risk of personal harm. Where modest risk or harm is anticipated, informed consent must be obtained.
4. To the extent possible in a given study, researchers should anticipate potential threats to confidentiality. Such means as the removal of identifiers, the use of randomized responses, and other statistical solutions to problems of privacy should be used where appropriate.
5. Confidential information provided by research participants must be treated as such by sociologists, even when this information enjoys no legal protection or privilege and legal force is applied. The obligation to respect confidentiality also applies to members of research organizations (interviewers, coders, clerical staff, etc.) who have access to the information. It is the responsibility of the chief investigator to instruct staff members on this point.

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II. PUBLICATIONS AND REVIEW PROCESS

A. *Questions of Authorship and Acknowledgment*

1. Sociologists must acknowledge all persons who contributed significantly to the research and publication processes.
2. Claims and ordering of authorship must accurately reflect the contributions of all main participants in the research and writing process, including students.
3. Material taken verbatim from another person's published or unpublished work must be explicitly identified and referenced to its author. Borrowed ideas or data, even if not quoted, must be explicitly acknowledged.

B. *In submission for publication, authors, editors and referees share coordinate responsibilities.*

1. Journal editors must provide prompt decisions to authors of submitted manuscripts. They must monitor the work of associate editors and other referees so that delays are few and reviews are conscientious.
2. An editor's commitment to publish an essay must be binding on the journal.
3. Editors receiving reviews of manuscripts from persons who have previously reviewed those manuscripts for another journal should ordinarily seek additional reviews.
4. Submission of a manuscript to a professional journal clearly grants that journal first claim to publish, provided a decision on the submitted paper is rendered with reasonable promptness. Except where journal policies explicitly allow multiple submissions, a paper submitted to one English language journal may not be submitted to another journal published in English until after an offical decision has been received from the first journal, although, of course, the article can be withdrawn from all consideration to publish.

C. *Participation in Review Processes*

Sociologists are frequently asked to provide evaluations of manuscripts, research proposals, or other work of professional colleagues. In such work, sociologists should hold themselves to high standards of performance, in several specific ways:

1. Sociologists should decline requests for reviews of work of others where strong conflicts of interest are involved, such as may occur when a person is asked to review work by teachers, friends, or colleagues for whom he or she feels an overriding sense of personal obligation, competition, or enmity, or when such requests cannot be fulfilled on time.
2. Materials sent for review should be read in their entirety and considered carefully. Evaluations should be justified with explicit reasons.
3. Sociologists who are asked to review manuscripts and books they have previously reviewed should make this fact known to the editor requesting the review.

III. TEACHING AND SUPERVISION

The routine conduct of faculty responsibilities is treated at length in the faculty codes and AAUP rules accepted as governing procedures by the various institutions of higher learning. Sociologists in teaching roles should be familiar with the content of the codes in force at their institutions and should perform their responsibilities within such guidelines.

A. *Sociologists are obligated to protect the rights of students to fair treatment.*

1. Sociologists should provide students with a fair and honest statement of the scope

and perspective of their courses, clear expectations for student performance and fair evaluations of their work.

2. Departments of Sociology must provide graduate students with explicit policies and criteria about recruitment, admission, courses and examination requirements, financial support, and conditions of possible dismissal.
3. Sociology Departments should help to locate employment for their graduates.
4. Sociologists must refrain from disclosure of personal infonnation concerning students where such information is not directly relevant to issues of professional competence.

B. *Sociologists must refrain from exploiting students.*

1. Sociologists must not coerce or deceive students into serving as research subjects.
2. Sociologists must not represent the work of students as their own.

C. *Sociologists must not use their professional positions or rank to coerce personal or sexual favors or economic or professional advantages from students, research assistants, clerical staff or colleagues.*

D. *Sociologists may not permit personal animosities or intellectual differences vis-a-vis colleagues to foreclose student access to those colleagues.*

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Committee on Professional Ethics, appointed by the Council of the American Sociological Association, shall have primary responsibility for the interpretation of this Code, for the investigation of complaints brought under it, and for recommendations to Council pertinent to such complaints.

A. The Committee shall:

1. At any time, not necessarily in the context of the investigation of a particular case, advise the Council of the Association of its views of general ethical questions, which the Council may elect to publish in appropiate publications of the Association;
2. Receive complaints of violations of the Code of Ethics, and endeavor to resolve them by mediation, and if mediation is unsuccessful, proceed to a hearing. If, after a hearing, the Committee determines that an ethical violation occurred, it should so notify the parties and prepare a report for Council, which report may or may not recommend one of the following actions:
   a. Apply no sanctions;
   b. Suspend the membership and attendant privileges of a member (e.g., participation in the Annual Meeting) for a period to be recommended by the Committee;
   c. Request the resignation of a member; or,
   d. Terminate the membership of a member.

B. The Council of the Association shall receive case reports and recommendations from the Committee, and from the Review Board hereinafter provided, and take appropriate action.

C. The following are the rules and procedures under which the Committee operates:

1. Except as hereinafter provided, all formal actions of the Committee shall be adopted at a meeting at which a quorum is present, by a majority vote of the members present and voting. A quorum shall consist of a majority of members of the Committee.

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2. All complaints of violations of the Code of Ethics should be directed in writing to the Executive Officer of the Association who shall determine whether the accused is a member of the Association. If so, the Executive Officer shall communicate the entire complaint to the person or persons accused, together with a copy of the Code and these procedures (by registered mail with return receipt requested) and request a response within 90 days.
   a. The Committee shall consider complaints received from both members and non-members of the Association against members of the Association.
   b. In order to be considered by the Committee, complaints must be received within eighteen months of the alleged violation or, if received later, must be certified for Committee consideration by the ASA Council.
   c. The Executive Officer shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint, shall send a copy of the Code and these procedures, and, where necessary, advise the complainant that a formal complaint must include specification of the time, place, persons, and events constituting the alleged violation and cite the paragraph(s) of the Code alleged to be violated.
3. After acknowledgement of the complaint and the receipt of a response from the accused or after the lapse of 90 days without response, the Executive Officer shall send copies of the complaint, responses and supporting documents to all members of the Committee and to the complainant and the accused. After consideration, the Committee shall decide by majority vote whether (1) the case should not be pursued further, (2) further information is needed, (3) mediation should be attempted, or (4) the case should come to a hearing.
   a. If the Committee decides there should be no further pursuit of the case, the Chair shall communicate the decision and the reasons therefore to the Executive Officer, who shall notify all parties.
   b. If the Committee decides that further investigation of the case is necessary, it may direct inquiries through the Executive Officer to either the complainant or the accused, with copies of the request and responses thereto in every instance to the other party.
   c. If the Committee decides to attempt mediation, it shall appoint a mediator from among members of the Association, acceptable to both parties. The mediator shall in due course notify the Committee that the matter has been resolved by written agreement of the parties, or if no such resolution has been achieved, the mediator may (1) recommend that the matter be dropped, or (2) recommend that the case proceed to a hearing.
   d. If the Committee decides that a hearing is appropriate, either upon the recommendation of a mediator, or upon its own initiative, it shall advise the complainant and the accused that a hearing will be conducted, giving at least 90 days notice of time and place. A majority of members of the Committee and non-voting counsel shall constitute a quorum. The accused, as well as the the complainant, should be advised of their rights to introduce witnesses and evidence in their behalf, to cross-examine witnesses, and to have the assistance of professional or other counsel at the hearing. All documentary evidence to be introduced by the complainant, and the names of all witnesses to be offered in support of the charges shall be supplied to the accused at least 80 days prior to the hearing. If either complainant or accused refuses to participate in the hearing, the Committee may elect to continue without their participation.
   e. At the hearing, the evidence in support of the complaint shall be presented by the complainant, by complainant's lawyer or by a representative of the ASA Council, and the accused shall have full opportunity to answer the charges. The Committee may introduce its own witnesses in order to answer factual questions. It should be careful to maintain an attitude of objectivity throughout the investigation.

f. The Committee shall record the proceedings of the hearing. The Accused shall have the right to be present at all evidential sessions of the hearing and to have a transcript at cost.

g. Unless the accused requests and the committee grants a public hearing, the hearing of the complaint shall be private. All persons except those necessary for the conduct of the hearing shall be excluded.

h. At the conclusion of the introduction of all evidence, the accused, counsel for the accused or both, shall be permitted to argue against or in mitigation of the complaint.

i. Thereafter, the Committee shall conduct its further discussion in private.

j. If the Committee finds that no ethical violation has occurred, the parties shall be so notified by the Executive Officer and the case closed.

k. If the Committee finds that an ethical violation has clearly occurred, it shall prepare a report of the case summarizing its findings and recommendations (see A-2 above). A copy of that report shall be sent to the accused and complainant who shall have an opportunity to prepare written comments within 30 days as part of the appeals process.

l. When the Committee has followed the procedure set forth in paragraph "k", the findings shall be automatically appealed to a Review Board composed of three Past Presidents of the Association appointed by the current President. The Review Board shall consider the written record alone, and by majority vote shall recommend to the Council that the findings of the Committee be upheld, reversed or modified. Copies of the recommendations of the Review Board shall be sent to the complainant, the accused and the Committee on Professional Ethics, all of whom shall have 30 days to comment in writing before the recommendation is forwarded to Council.

m. The Council, after examination of the Committee's and the Review Board's recommendations and comments thereto, shall make a final determination of the case on behalf of the Association, and either dismiss the case or take appropriate action (see A-2 above).

D. The effective date of these procedures is July 1, 1984.

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